

able to set up the freight service since our region is a regular gold mine for the province of Quebec.

Every day, trains of up to 100, 125, 140 freight cars carrying all kinds of freight: copper, iron and aluminum ore, lumber, newsprint, are seen rolling out of the Saguenay-Lake St. John region.

This means, Mr. Speaker, that our area is certainly not contributing to the deficit of the Canadian National Railways and I do not intend to place too much blame on those in charge of freight movements because they have set up servo-centres and developed an efficient system. What I do have against them is their having systematically snuffed out all interest on the part of the public in passenger transportation.

When you consider the progress which the area has achieved in all fields of endeavour, development of industry and the increase in population, you realize that as the population is increasing the railways are reducing their services. We have reason to wonder about so many things. After all, when the Canadian National ends up with a deficit, as it often occurs, the taxpayers are the ones who have to make it up, but without getting any service in return.

• (1740)

Mr. Speaker, I should like to say a few words particularly on the passenger service. I was just about to send a letter to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson) but, since I have the opportunity of denouncing the action of the Canadian National Railways, I am going to do my duty as a member of Parliament and set forth a situation which is no longer tolerable in the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean area with regard to the passenger and sleeping-cars services. I want to talk about serious discriminatory steps taken in our area by the new CNR experts against the users of sleeping-car facilities. The responsible people in the CNR are very much aware that our area ranks first when it comes to freight transportation.

The reward offered us for this participation is the cancellation or the slow death of our passenger service.

We are told that the number of passengers is decreasing and I am convinced of it, Mr. Speaker. However, I add that if large centres were given the same kind of service, not only would the number of passengers decrease but there would be none left between Montreal and Ottawa or Montreal and Toronto.

The management is forgetting that the CN is above all a transportation service and not a service created to open new hotels throughout Canada. It is precisely this poor service given by the Canadian National that everybody is complaining about.

Passenger cars date back to the years 1925 or 1930. We shall soon be celebrating their 50th anniversary. Besides being decrepit, they are badly maintained and sometimes have a musty smell. Some of them, Mr. Speaker—I must tell the House about this—were full of cockroaches. Lastly, all the museum specimens were sent to the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean area. It happened only once in ten years that we got a fine 80-seat car, but authorities, realizing their error, hastened to send it out west.

National Transportation Policy

How many fights we had to put in order to keep our sleeping-cars or what is left of them! That on the Dolbeau service has simply been suppressed and that on the Chicoutimi service has been reduced to its simplest expression. And to further discourage passengers, a rate increase has just been imposed which took everyone by surprise. It took effect on June 1, which was last Thursday.

Mr. Speaker, I want to express objection to this increase in the sleeping-car rate. I wonder who approved this increase. Imagine that for a lower bunk, a person must pay \$14, and two persons must pay \$21 for the Montreal-to-Chambord trip, a distance of 250 miles.

When they say that meals are included, they are shamelessly lying, because when you leave Montreal at 8 or 9 o'clock, you already have had your dinner, and when you reach Chambord at 6 in the morning, you have your breakfast in the station restaurant. For that matter, there is no dining car on the train to Chambord, Chicoutimi, Dolbeau, just a small lounge and counter.

Coming back to Montreal, as the train reaches Central Station at seven o'clock in the morning, you must have your breakfast there, for it is too early for the lounge and counter to be open.

These so-called meals which are paid for but never served are an outright robbery. In addition, a single person must pay \$26 for a roomette; a couple travelling together will pay \$35; and if there is a child with them, the rate is up to \$41. And all this, to travel over a distance of 267 miles in a small musty roomette.

Let us hope that the C.N.R. management is made up of honest people who are comparing prices in western Canada or for a trip to Toronto over the same distance. It is a scandal.

One must also add the price of meals when travelling West; passengers have a right to curse the CNR and all its little bright boys. Can anyone truly believe that our people are not as good as those of other provinces and do not deserve equal treatment? We are not asking for better treatment, but for equal treatment.

If an hon. member wants to go on a primitive trip, he should go to Lac Saint-Jean in the winter on a CNR train. He is sure to feel he has gone back 50 years; in fact, on boarding what is called a coach, a new 50-year-old coach, he will freeze to death or be too warm, and if he asks somebody to do something about it the answer will be: You must wait till we reach Montreal. Is it not incredible!

I have seen women with their winter coats on wrapped up in blankets. They were freezing because the heating system of the train was not working.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): Are you sure that is the reason?

Mr. Gauthier: And at other times—I will ask the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Guay) to make a short trip in my area during the winter; he will see how interesting it is.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): I would be willing to go.

Mr. Gauthier: He will realize how interesting it is, especially when he has a look at the cars; he is used to travel